

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAM-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1340

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJ: SUSPENSION OF CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN MADRID WORKER DISTRICT

SUMMARY: WEEKEND SUSPENSION OF CHURCH-SPONSORED ASSEMBLY
IN MADRID WORKING CLASS DISTRICT HAS ADDED NEW STRAINS TO
CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS. END SUMMARY

1. DGS ON MARCH 15 ORDERED LAST MINUTE SUSPENSION OF FIRST
CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY IN VALLECAS, PRINCIPAL WORKING CLASS AREA
OF MADRID WITH ONE-HALF MILLION RESIDENTS. PLAN HAD BEEN FOR
1,500 PERSONS, BOTH CLERGY AND LAITY, TO ASSEMBLE OVER
MARCH 15-16 AND 22-23 WEEKENDS.

2. ASSEMBLY HAD BEEN PLANNED MONTHS PREVIOUSLY, AND MADRID
CARDINAL TARANCON, PRESIDENT OF SPANISH EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE,
WAS SCHEDULED TO PRESIDE. PRINCIPAL ORGANIZER WAS MADRID
AUXILIARY BISHOP INIESTA, WHO HAS ECCLESIASTICAL RESPONSIBILITY
FOR VALLECAS AND ADJOINING ZONES.

3. POLICE WERE SENT TO MEETING HALL TO MAKE SURE THAT MEETING
WAS NOT HELD. AS JUSTIFICATION, DGS PUBLISHED NOTE CLAIMING
INFORMATION THAT SOME MARKEDLY EXTERMIST POLITICAL ELEMENTS
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PLANNED TO USE MEETINGS TO PROMOTE HOSTILE REACTIONS AGAINST

GOVT AND AUTHORITIES AND TO CREATE A CLIMATE OF SOCIAL TENSION IN VALLECAS. DGS' NOTE FURTHER SAID THAT AFTER WEIGHING RISKS OF DISTURBANCES IT RELUCTANTLY HAD DECIDED TO SUSPEND ASSEMBLY.

4. PRIEST INVOLVED IN ASSEMBLY PREPARATIONS TOLD EMBOFF THAT THERE WERE SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF LEFTIST PRIESTS AND LAITY WHOSE PROPOSAL WAS TO USE CONFERENCE TO ELABORATE HARD-HITTING DOCUMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS STRONGLY CRITICAL OF GOS' RECORD RE HUMAN RIGHTS IN SPAIN, BUT HE CLAIMED THAT NO ALTERCATIONS BY EXTREMISTS AT ASSEMBLY WOULD HAVE OCCURRED AND SAID ALL PARTICIPANTS WANTED TO MAKE ASSEMBLY SERIOUS AFFAIRS AND AVOID ANYTHING WHICH WOULD HAVE DISCREDITED ASSEMBLY OR PROVIDED GOVT EXCUSE TO INTERVENE.

5. EPISODE HAS PROMPTED VARIOUS PROTEST ACTIONS, INCLUDING MARCH 16 REFUSAL BY PRIESTS TO SAY MASS IN SOME 24 MADRID PARISHES, AND A PROTEST BY "NATIONAL COMMISSION ON JUSTICE AND PEACE" HEADED BY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC LEADER RUIZ GIMENEZ. ADDITIONALLY MADRID'S CARDINAL AND AUXILIARY BISHOPS MET YESTERDAY AND ARE MEETING TODAY TO DECIDE ON WHAT COURSE OF PROTEST ACTION TO PURSUE.

6. COMMENT: GOVT BELIEVED TO HAVE ACTED IN RESPONSE TO CONCERN AMONG CONSERVATIVES WITHIN GOVT AND PERHAPS BY RIGHTIST GROUPS OVER ASSEMBLY. IN ANY EVENT, THIS EPISODE HAS FURTHER STRAINED ALREADY TROUBLED STATE OF CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS. SOME KV POSSIBILITY VATICAN, THROUGH ITS NUNCIO, MAY PROTEST INCIDENT. ALSO REPORTED IS SOME DISCONTENT AMONG SOME CLERGY OVER TARANCON FAILURE TO REACT STRONGLY AGAINST MEASURE, AND OVER WHAT IS SEEN AS HIS OVERLY CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE IN THIS AND OTHER CHURCH*STATE DISPUTES.

7. THIS EPISODE COMES ON HEELS OF OTHER INCIDENTS WHICH ARE ADDING FURTHER STRAINS TO DELICATE CHURCH/STATE RELATIONS, SUCH AS: (A) RECENT PRESENTATION BY CARDINAL TARANCON TO GOVT OF 160 THOUSAND SIGNATURE PETITION OF JUSTICE AND PEACE COMMISSION CALLING FOR PARDON FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS (WHICH ITSELF AROUSED A CONTROVERSY ABOUT CARDINAL TARANCON'S ORIGINAL RELUCTANCE TO PRESENT PETITION OR TO ACT FORCEFULLY IN THIS CASE); AND (2) RECENT DOCUMENT OF SPANISH LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BISHOPS COUNCIL ON "RECONCILIATION" WHICH, INTER ALIA, AFFIRMS RIGHT OF CHURCH TO PREACH GOSPEL AS IT SEES FIT, RIGHT OF WORKERS TO ASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FREELY, AND OF CHURCH TO IDENTIFY ITSELF WITH THE POOR AND WORKING CLASSES (CONTENTS OF THIS DOCUMENT WHICH WERE SUPPOSEDLY BEING KEPT SECRET UNTIL DOCUMENT'S SCHEDULED RELEASE NEXT MONTH, WERE RECENTLY LEAKED TO PRESS).
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